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AUTHOR Weaver, Robert C.
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ABSTRACT

This paper is organized into four parts. Part One, The Historical Pattern and Its Study, notes that the impulse to suburbanize is probably as old as the city itself. However, because of magnitude alone, contemporary suburban settlement would have to be assessed as a phenomenon that is uniquely different from its predecessors. Part Two, The Changed Role of the Suburbs Since World War II, observes that, unlike the central city, the basic function and form of which have changed only in degree, the suburban settlements that have emerged since World War II have little in common with the ecological type called suburb previous to that time. Part III, Motivations of Housing Consumers in Opting for the Suburbs, asserts that knowing why the millions of American households that opted to live in the suburbs since World War II made that choice can tell us much about the future of our cities. Part IV, The Impact of Race Upon Suburbanization, proposes that because in recent decades that exodus from the central city to the suburbs peaked at the same time that a large number of newcomers to the large metropolitan areas were readily identifiable minorities, there has been much distortion of what has been involved. Some have confused coincidence with causation. (Author/JM)

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THE SUBURBANIZATION OF AMERICA

by

Robert C. Weaver*

A Paper Presented to the
United States Commission on Civil Rights
at a Consultation on
"School Desegregation: The Courts and Suburban Migration."

Washington, D. C.

December 8, 1975

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE SUBURBANIZATION OF AMERICA

I. The Historical Pattern and Its Study

Suburbanization has been going on much longer than most persons realize. It, and most certainly the impulse to suburbanize, are probably as old as the city itself, if we can judge from a letter, written in cuneiform on a clay tablet, addressed to King Cyrus of Persia in 539 B.C. by an early suburbanite who extolled that life style: "Our property seems to me the most beautiful in the world. It is so close to Babylon that we enjoy all the advantages of the city, and yet when we come home we are away from all the noise and dust." 1/

Although the basic motives that triggered suburbanization in ancient Babylon have changed little through the centuries, the form and content of suburbs has undergone vast changes; never more so than in the United States within the past three decades. Because of magnitude alone, contemporary suburban settlement would have to be assessed as a phenomenon that is uniquely different from its predecessors; a classic example of the philosophic concept of quantitative change resulting in qualitative change. The suburban population of the United States in 1970 exceeded for the first time that of the central cities and that of the non-metropolitan areas. The suburbs contained 74.9 million inhabitants; the central cities, 62.2 million; the non-metropolitan areas, 63.2 million.

This phenomenon cannot be understood if we limit our investigations to observations made in our lifetime; not even if our age permits us to make them before World War II. As noted by "The President's Task Force on Suburban Problems" in 1968, "To be meaningful, any examination of the suburbs as they are today -- and as they will be in the future -- must consider the nation's growth trends that began before the turn of the century."[2/]

As a matter of record, this phenomenon was already being studied by scholars long before this century began. Thus, Charles Booth, whose classic works on cities were written in the late 19th Century, described the decentralizing trend of industry at that time to the outskirts of London, where more land was available at lower prices. His studies of the influence upon metropolitan form of social and economic classes, and of transportation and housing, which he considered keys to understanding the urban growth process, led him to predict a trend toward local suburban centers.[3/]

Filtering such scholarly observations upon urban form through his vividly imaginative mind, the genius that was H.G. Wells predicted in 1902 that the very terms "town" and "city" will become as obsolete as "mail coach", because spreading urbanization will submerge them as distinct identities. Casting about for a proper designation of the predicted urban form of the future, Wells wrote that "We may for our present purposes call these coming town provinces 'urban regions'"[4/]

Wells' "urban regions" had been in existence in the United States for several decades at the time he wrote the above lines. But what has come to be regarded as suburbanization has deep and often unrecognized roots in population movements within cities. Movement of the more affluent from concentrations of the poor has long characterized urban life. Jean Gottman, for example, reminds us that it occurred in the larger cities of Europe during the Industrial Revolution.[5]

In the United States a similar process has long been typical, and social standing in American cities has increasingly been evidenced not only by the type of housing but the type of neighborhood.[6] Today the latter is the more important. The flight from deterioration -- real or anticipated -- has, in large part, been a movement away from poor immigrants or, more recently, from blacks, Puerto Ricans or Chicanos. Actually, however, the migration of Negroes to cities was quite small as compared to the earlier volume of European immigrants. At its peak the latter migration was at least eight million in a decade and most settled in the cities; Negro migration at its height was about a million and a half in a decade. "So in terms of infiltrating cities with large numbers of low-income people with a different culture, the Negro migration has not been unusual."[7]

Ours has long been one of the most mobile populations in the world. Involved was not only movement across regional and state lines and from rural to urban areas, but also with-

in urban areas. Thus, the movement from the center of the city to the periphery and beyond is nothing new. Census data for many years concealed this fact, largely because the city boundaries were distant from the active residential land use. At the same time, many American cities in the past annexed territory or otherwise extended their boundaries. As a result, large-scale building, industrial, and commercial activity could and did take place within the city's limits.[8] A generation or longer ago, suburbs were frequently within the boundaries of cities. They were at its fringes which, at that time, contained much undeveloped land and large sections where streets had not been cut through.

Several new factors have been introduced more recently. The first was a revolution in transportation. The horsecar extended the geographic limits of urban development. Railroads, with their land resources and commuter trains -- as well as their intensive sales efforts soon expanded by the activities of the real estate industry -- successfully played up class exclusiveness as an attribute of suburbia.[9] Commuter trains, as the horsecar which permitted those who could afford it to live beyond the poor, first in the city and then at periphery, extended that option to small villages beyond it. Electric rapid mass transportation, successively in the form of streetcars, elevated lines, and subways, facilitated much greater dispersal of the urban population within the city and beyond its corporate limits into suburbs. In the process,

economic groups which had previously not been able to afford the transportation costs were able increasingly to participate. It was, of course, the automobile which made large-scale and far-flung suburban living possible for millions of Americans. Its advent consummated the final escape from the space limitations of the endowments of the horse which had characterized the 19th century city.

The year 1900 marked the apex of preponderance of population for a number of central cities in relation to their suburbs. In that year Boston's population was already only 43% of its Standard Metropolitan Area as it would be defined in 1950. By 1970 it had shrunken to a mere 23%. (Unlike most cities, Boston's boundaries have not been expanded by annexation in over a century.) Cincinnati in 1900 contained 63% of the population of its 1950 Standard Metropolitan Area; shrinking to 33% in 1970. St. Louis' 71% in 1900 had become 26% in 1970. Buffalo's 69% had become 39%. Cleveland's 65% had become 36%. The engulfment of Detroit by its suburbs was unusually precipitous, because as late as 1920 Detroit accounted for 77% of the population of its metropolitan area and shrank to 36% by 1970.[10/]

It is noteworthy that New York City in 1850, then consisting of the island of Manhattan, contained only 50% of the population of its metropolitan area as it came to be defined in 1950 (a definition which excluded New Jersey). New York City was to achieve 68% in 1900 as a result of the consolidation which created the present city, consisting of the five

boroughs. (In 1970 New York's population of some 7.9 million represented only 39% of its 31 county metropolitan region.)

The explanation of this relentless outward push of urbanization, then increasingly taking place beyond the boundaries of central cities, was given in succinct language by the above quoted President's Task Force:

> "In the decade before the dawn of the 20th Century, the frontier was virtually closed to further expansion. This meant that, by and large, subsequent population increases and movements would have to be contained within existing borders, taking advantage of open spaces within that territory rather than opening up new territories to our burgeoning population.
>
> "This development was followed, in the first half of this century, by a major shift of the nation's population and jobs from the land into the cities; from rural areas into urban centers. As a result of this internal movement, immigration, and natural urban increases, the 1960 census showed nearly 70 percent of Americans to be living in urban areas -- a significant turnaround from the urban-rural population distribution of half a century earlier.
>
> "Recently another shift has taken place -- and is destined to continue. By and large, the cities have developed all the land within their boundaries, and the suburbs are now the growth centers of the nation. The suburbs are absorbing at an increasing rate the people spilling outward from the urban cores, the many families migrating inward from rural regions, and natural increases in population. The suburbanization of America -- rather than its urbanization -- has become the country's dominant growth pattern." 11/

The year 1900 seems also to mark the beginning of a widespread awareness of the suburban phenomenon. It was in the decade of 1900-1910 that the Bureau of the Census first took

statistical notice. Beginning in 1910 the Bureau made population data available for what it termed "metropolitan districts," forerunners of today's Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, the now familiar SMSAs. In preparation for the 1950 Census, it was decided that defining of metropolitan areas and identification of classes of data to be collected should be the responsibility of a broad-based, inter-departmental committee of the federal government. This marked the recognition of the importance of metropolitan areas for record keeping, analysis and projection for a wide range of subject matter. SMSAs have since become a critically essential classification for all departments of the federal government that touch upon urban affairs, as well as for governments at state and local levels. They are equally essential for private enterprise and scholarly research. It would be difficult to imagine either the public or private sectors being able to know what is happening in urban America and to plan their operations in relation to it without the availability of data that treats cities and suburbs as parts of a metropolitan whole.

Nor was it long before students of urban trends tried to classify the new suburban phenomenon, to define it, to describe it and to formulate theories to explain its appearance and continuing evolution. One of the first was Graham Taylor, who wrote Satellite Cities in 1915. Ten years later (1925) Harlan Douglas published a more ambitious effort to comprehend

the new urban scene with his The Suburban Trend. What Leo J. Schnore identifies as the seminal work on "metropolitanism" was published in 1922 by N.S.B. Gras, an historical analysis of the evolution of the city's economy into the "metropolitan economy." In 1933, R.D. McKenzie published the first effort at comprehensive statistical treatment of metropolitan development, in the course of which he documented "the rise of the metropolitan community."[12/]

The decade of the 1920's had seen the first attempt to plan for an entire urban region in the six-year effort that produced the "Plan for New York and Its Environs," leading to the formation of the Regional Plan Association. Basic to the preparation of this plan were the regional economic studies of Robert Murray Haig, Professor of Business Administration at Columbia University. Dr. Haig's studies proved to be the basic work in documenting and analysing the process by which the economic base of an entire metropolitan area emerges and develops.[13/] His painstaking documentation of the relocation of the various industries from Manhattan to nearby locations in Brooklyn and Jersey City, and subsequent removal to more distant parts of the New York metropolitan area or beyond it to other parts of the country laid the factual basis for an understanding that not only population, but also employment, is caught up in a process of movement out from the center toward the periphery of metropolitan areas. The suburbanization of jobs and its reciprocal relationship with population

movement remains a subject that requires continuing monitoring and refinement of theoretical insight. Our ability to predict in this area can be decisive in forecasting the future of cities and suburbs.

Suburbanization slowed down during the Great Depression when both economic expansion and residential construction came to virtual standstills, then recovered slowly in the late 1930s, and was finally stirred into feverish activity as the decade closed with rearmament and the outbreak of war in Europe. War production in the 1940s brought a reversal in the outward trend of population and employment as the expansion of industrial capacity took place mainly in established centers which contained basic plants and housed an available labor force. This was to prove to be the central cities' last economic advance as compared with the suburbs. As one study noted, "The evidence of a further concentration of manufacturing employment in the large cities during World War II now appears as a temporary interruption of a long-term trend of a declining share that was begun as far back at least as the beginning of this century."[14/]

Even before World War II came to an end, increasing numbers of leaders in government and the private sector began to project concerns for the post-war shape of things, especially with reference to where the jobs that were to meet the goal of full employment were to be located, and where the houses were to be built to give American families adequate

shelter. As early at 1942 one voice, speaking for town planners and architects, called attention to the bleak prospects of America's maturing cities. J. L. Sert, in a book prophetically titled Can Our Cities Survive? warned that "Up to recent times city planners have disregarded the fact that, when a certain degree of maturity is reached in the cities of today, they universally exhibit the same alarming symptoms. These endanger their very existence." The failure to make the city livable, Sert declared thirty-three years ago, causes people "to abandon their overcrowded neighborhoods for 'a quiet home' in remote suburbs, undeterred by hours of uncomfortable travel back and forth. Industry, too, moves out -- to cheaper land, to regions of lower taxes, to convenience sites on rail sidings or side roads. The city is breaking up. Such dispersion of great cities knows neither control nor planning. It is provoked by urban chaos itself, and is facilitated by modern means of transportation."[15/]

Crying out in the frustration and despair of those who see when few others do, Sert challenged his contemporaries. "It has not even occurred to most people to question the condition of our cities. A conscious minority, however, familiar with the gravity of the situation and recognizing its eventualities in the near future, might well ask themselves the question: Can -- and should -- our cities survive?"

Writing in December 1945, only a few months after V-Day, Charles S. Ascher, then Director of the Urban Development Division of the Federal National Housing Agency, argued the case for the assembly of land in inner cities through clearance and warned against the consequences of supplying all new housing on vacant land at the metropolitan fringe. Citing the need for 12,600,000 new nonfarm homes in the decade ahead, Ascher asked:

> "Where will these millions of new homes be built?" He then described the deceptive ease of spreading out over the distant landscape: "There is no dearth of land on the fringes of most cities. Land appears to be available in large tracts, easily assembled, at reasonable prices. There is no cost for tearing down old structures. There are often fewer controls in the outlying townships, no building code, no zoning regulation. These factors attract the builder to the fringe land.
>
> "The families who are to live in these new houses are also attracted to the fringe in search of human values for themselves and their children; openness, greenery, play space, community feeling. Low taxes are accepted happily, without too much thought for the inadequacy of services that go with them.
>
> "This search is sometimes an illusion. If too few neighbors arrive, services remain inadequate. Streets remain unpaved, there is no good high school within easy reach. If the fringe land becomes more intensely developed, the demand for urban services -- police protection, better schools -- drives up the cost of government. The empty lots are no longer open for softball games. The commuting grind may become wearing after a while.
>
> "Meanwhile, slums and blighted areas in the centers of cities rot." 16/

If even heard, these and other voices went unheeded. As the first troop ships were reported on the high seas returning millions of citizen soldiers to take up their lives where war had interrupted, most of them concerned with prospects for employment and housing, Congress and the executive branch feverishly initiated programs to stimulate the economy and get housing built. Those with concern for long-range consequences were trampled underfoot by the stampede to "get things moving" -- and by those in a hurry to get to the places from which the revived consumer activity could be most successfully exploited.

Most of the economy needed little from government to "take off"; actually only that government dismantle controls and get out of the way. Millions of product-hungry consumers with bulging wartime savings did the rest. Housing, however, required a liberal credit policy and FHA supplied it. The country was off and running in its longest and biggest economic boom. It was to transform the nation in a number of important respects. One was to carry our large cities perilously close to the doom foretold by Sert. The other was to make tens of millions of upward mobile families also outward mobile. Mass migrations covered the land as millions went from cities to suburbs, leaving vacuums that sucked in other millions from impoverished rural areas. One result was that the suburbs also were transformed.

II. The Changed Role of the Suburb Since World War II

Unlike the central city, the basic function and form of which have changed only in degree, the suburban settlements that emerged since World War II have little in common with the ecological type called "suburb" previous to that time. The contemporary suburb is different from its earlier namesake in both function and form. Without the functional role it has assumed, today's suburb could not have attained its vast scale. There could hardly have been a social and/or economic need at this magnitude for the classic type of "bedroom" suburb.

Essentially the difference between the pre-war and post-war types of suburban development is that the former existed in a symbiotic relationship to the city as one of its more remote residential neighborhoods, while the latter increasingly duplicates the functions of the central city and, consequently, competes with it as a destructive rival.[17/]

The persistent, even if at times interrupted, growth of population and, more vitally, employment in the suburban rings around central cities, accumulated over time what George Sternlieb identifies as the "critical mass" that ignited to propel the suburbs ahead of their central cities in many of the very functions that historically were the raison d'etre for the cities' existence.

After pointing out that in Newark there is not a single first-run theatre left in the entire city of 400,000, and that central city museums and public libraries have their operating hours and acquisition budgets cut because of declining municipal tax revenues, Sternlieb observes that "meanwhile, the suburbs have achieved critical mass, a scale of population and buying power which permits them to sustain amenities of a type and at a level which once only the central city was capable of sustaining. The shopping center which had at best a single department store branch now has three and soon will have four. The suburban music calendar is evolving from a marginal summer collection of odds and ends to a year-round independent activity. Small suburban hospitals have grown to thousand-bed monsters which can supply all the services and specialists availabe in the biggest central city hospitals."[18/]

But at the core of the suburbs' critical mass is employment. From the slow growth of employment in the suburban rings from 1900 to 1950, it took a forward leap in the decades since. Whereas previous to World War II, suburban employment gains tended to keep pace with that of their central cities, since 1950 they have tended to outstrip them. In many of the large metropolitan areas the central city recorded an absolute loss in number of jobs, while their suburban rings gained spectacularly. Among the nation's ten largest SMSAs, between 1960 and 1970, New York City lost 9.7% of its jobs, while its

suburbs gained 24.9%. Los Angeles lost 10.8%, while its suburbs gained 16.2%. Chicago lost 13.9%, while its suburbs gained 64.4%. Philadelphia lost 11.3%, while its subrbs gained 61.5%. Detroit lost a whopping 22.5%, while its suburbs gained 61.5%. Though San Francisco and Oakland made a minute gain of 0.4%, their suburbs gained 22.7%. Washington D.C. gained 1.9%, but its suburbs gained a spectacular 117.9%. Boston lost 8.6%, while its suburbs gained 20.2%. Only in Pittsburgh did the central city hold its own with a 4.4% increase compared tc only a 2.5% increase in its suburbs. St. Louis lost 15.2%, while its suburbs gained 80.4%.[19/]

Commenting on the changing economic function of the central city, Raymond Vernon, Harvard economist and director of the multi-million dollar New York Metropolitan Study in the late 1950s, concluded that "the outward movement of people will be matched by an outward movement of jobs. Retail trade will follow the populations. Manufacturing and wholesaling establishments will continue to respond to obsolescence by looking for new quarters and by renting in structures in the suburban industrial areas where obsolescence is less advanced. The movement of jobs will reinforce the movement of residences."[20/]

Metropolitan developments during the sixteen years since Vernon made these predictions have given us no reason to find fault with them. His optimism regarding continuing high levels of office employment in central cities, however, seems

to have been exaggerated as significant numbers of both corporate headquarters and smaller business offices continue to drift away to suburban locations.

The changed role of the suburbs therefore, casts them in the role of a new type of human settlement, an "outer city" wrapped around the old central city, living in uneasy proximity to it, linked through surviving governmental, utility, communications, and banking networks, but relatively independent socially, culturally, and increasingly so, economically.

The populations of these new outer cities are relatively more homogeneous ethnically and in social class than the populations of central cities. The suburban population is characteristically younger, whiter, more affluent, better educated and more prestigiously employed than the majority of central city residents. Though controversy is generated inevitably by the issues at stake in suburban political and community affairs, the suburban population achieves a consensus in feeling that they have "arrived" socially and economically by achieving suburban residence. This status image of suburban life is accepted by most of the inhabitants of central cities also. Such acceptance is critically essential to the continuing dynamism of the suburbanization process by supplying endless candidates for suburban status who seek but to realize it when the pratical means are at hand.

III. Motivations of Housing Consumers in Opting for the Suburbs

Knowing why the millions of American households that opted to live in the suburbs since World War II made that choice can tell us much about the future of our cities; more precisely, the extent to which the impulse to suburbanize is likely to influence locational choices of present city residents can tell us what population changes to expect.

Is suburbia populated by millions of refugees who reluctantly fled disintegrating cities? Or is it populated by millions of pilgrims lured to the promised land?

Putting it another way: were they "pushed" or "pulled"? Repelled or attracted?

Logically considered, neither of these motivations can stand by itself. Choice is always relative. Something is always better or worse -- more suitable or less suitable. A poor suburban situation will obviously not be preferred over a good city one.

It is necessary, then, to conceive of locational choices as reflecting some measures of both "push" and "pull." Though the proportions of each vary across the wide range of individual situations, the overwhelming evidence establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that the suburbs' "pull" was the predominant motive that brought millions of households there in the past three decades and continues to shape such locational decisions today. An image of millions of city-loving Americans being driven to joyless exile in the suburbs by invading hordes of undesirables conflicts with both documented evidence and urban history.

Since the suburban option can only be exercised by those white homeseekers who can meet the required economic criteria, and by those minority homeseekers who, additionally, can overcome racially discriminatory barriers, it is pertinent to inquire how many city residents live there because they prefer it and how many live there because they are held captive by economic and/or racial circumstances. Surveys that seek to answer this question indicate that a high proportion of both whites and non-whites consider themselves captives seeking release.

The ease with which Americans exercised their option to suburbanize was facilitated by their uniquely high mobility. As one of Henry James' characters put it as long ago as the 1880s, "...At the end of three or four years we'll move. That's the way to live in New York -- to move every three or four years. Then you always get the last thing... So you see we'll always have a new house; you get all the latest improvements..."[21/]

A study of housing consumer behavior sponsored by ACTION, the National Council for Good Cities, in the late 1950s, one of the most intensive and extensive investigations of the subject, reported, among other factors, on housing mobility:[22/]

> "The willingness of the American family to change location with changing circumstances is without parallel. About 20 percent of all persons move during any given year. For example, between March, 1958, and March, 1959, the Bureau of the Census reports that 32.8 million persons -- almost one out of every five -- moved from one dwelling to another. Two-thirds of the movers stayed in the same county, however. A large proportion of those who moved were young adults. Of the

> group between the ages of 20 and 24, two out of five changed their residences between 1958 and 1959.
>
> "If past behavior is an accurate gauge of future trends, it is reasonable to suppose that within one year 20 to 25 percent of all families will have moved at least once; that within two years, 30 to 33 percent will have moved; that within five years, 50 to 57 percent will have moved; that within ten years about 75 percent will have moved; and that within twenty years, no more than 10 percent will be living in dwellings they occupy today.
>
> "Apparently not more than half the people who move do so because of dissatisfaction with house or neighborhood. The relationship between mobility and dissatisfaction with a dwelling may stand unbalanced, however. A shortage of dwelling units can depress the mobility rate even when dissatisfaction is high. Also, less than half of the persons who say they are dissatisfied with their housing actually translate their desire to move into action."

There are many reasons why people move today. However, the prevailing opinion of investigators is that most moves are probably job-related. Americans place a high value on increased earnings, or the potential for career advancement, vis-a-vis residential continuity. A major Chicago real estate firm reports that an analysis of house sales in 1973 reveals that "rising affluence, changing neighborhoods, new family formations, and the fulfillment of ivy-covered dreams don't even come close to job transfers in the used home sales derby."[23/]

A study of intra-city migration found the same emphasis on jobs. "When interviewers ask American migrants why they have moved, the migrants give answers relating to jobs far more than any other answers: the largest number usually report a specific

job brought them to the city, but another sizable number say they came looking for work."[24/]

Even if Americans move frequently and pursue employment opportunities, why do they choose the suburbs?

Americans have never demonstrated any special love for the city. On the contrary, an anti-city bias seems to run through our national mores. Jefferson's outspoken views, widely quoted, were not idosyncratic.[25/] National response to the financial plight of New York City, beginning with the President, has overtones of both antipathy to, and envy of, the big city that typifies values with which a majority of Americans identify. It has long been fashionable among Americans to consider big cities as places to visit but not to live in. Except for about a score of the largest, many American cities tend to resemble large towns, with single, detached houses the predominant type.

For many generations inmigrants to large cities were either European immigrants or American boys from the farm. The latter usually "made good" and bought a single family house in what was known as a "residential neighborhood" or escaped to a suburb. The immigrants usually raised a family in the inner city and lived to see their off-spring follow the American ex-farm boys, after an interval of two or three decades, to a "residential neighborhood" or, perhaps, even to the suburbs. The inner city was for the poor relatives, those not sufficiently capable or lucky to "make it" upward and outward.

If for the former farm boy who made good, a single family house was a substitute for "My Old Sweet Home" (the original

inspiration for which was in a rural hamlet in far eastern Long Island), its location in a suburb was even more evocative of his native village. Suburbia became a nostalgic throwback to an earlier American experience savored by those who rejected urban life styles and urban values.

Charles Abrams put the matter well:

> "The suburb in an expanding world met the struggle for space, privacy and the nostalgia for country life. Land was cheaper here, too; family would get a house on two lots with trees, a garden, and play space for children. Here was the place to find a home and the bundle of rights, dreams, satisfactions, and illusions that come wrapped with the deed." 26/

Robert C. Wood, in his pioneering study of the political rationale for suburban government argued that:

> "Suburbia, defined as an ideology, a faith in communities of limited size and a belief in the conditions of intimacy, is quite real. The dominance of old values explains more about the people and the politics of the suburbs than any other interpretation... The conviction that provincial life is best has been with us for a long time and it has endured in the face of greater attacks than the ones contemporary America presents. We show our instinctive commitment to the ideology by the fact that we rarely examine its assumptions critically. We show our conscious allegiance by the oratorical homage we pay to the ideal of small neighborhoods, single homes, and political jurisdictions of limited size." 27/

This ideology has been woven into our national value system: virtue is associated with homeownership and small town residence; vice (or, at least, lesser moral stature) is associated with tenancy and big city residence. The suburb is

viewed as the best accomodation possible for residence within the orbit of economic opportunity concentrated in our metropolitan centers.

America's prediliction towards homeownership, although generally recognized and equally approved -- often unrealistically -- has pertinence in the analysis of the rise and expansion of suburbia. It should, however, be recognized that homeownership is a middle-class concept which assumes middle-class values and opportunities for those who participate. As we have found, to our dismay, attempts to extend it across the board to those who do not have middle-class opportunities or relative security and reasonable levels or income can be, and has often been, tragic.

One of the most significant potential benefits of owning a home is appreciation in property value. And this is most likely to occur in the suburbs where the activity of one's neighbors, the recent investment of public funds for infrastructure and public services, as well as the process of urbanization per se create higher values. Thus the cult of ownership of individual homes serves to accelerate suburbanization.

Nor is it necessary any longer to choose a suburban location with an eye toward convenience and cost of commuting to the central city. The post-World War II suburb now usually offers more job opportunities than does its central city. Employment distribution in 1970 for the Pittsburgh SMSA showed 63.7% of all jobs in the suburbs. For other large SMSAs the

percentage of jobs in the suburbs were as follows: Boston, 62.2%; Detroit, 61.4%; St. Louis, 58%; Washington, D.C., 54.9%; Los Angeles, 54.3%; Philadelphia, 51.8%; San Francisco-Oakland, 50%; Baltimore, 49.9%; Chicago, 47%; Cleveland, 46%; and Minneapolis-St. Paul, 41%.

Students of housing consumer preferences provide convincing evidence of additional reasons why Americans perceive of suburban residence as the preferred environment. In a landmark study of consumer preferences in the late 1950s by ACTION, they found that all existing documentation confirmed a strong choice for suburban living, both by those who had realized it and those who still lived in the city. A Fortune survey in 1946 found that among residents within large cities (over 100,000), only 36 percent really preferred their large city location. An equal number said they would prefer to live in a small town close to the city. Conversely, only 5 to 15 percent of those already living in the suburbs expressed a desire to move back into the city.

ACTION's researchers found that other surveys examined confirmed Fortune's results. This caused the researchers to sum up their findings with the conclusion that:

> "The suburban dream prevails among most consumers in whatever location and whatever section of the country. The suburban urge is strongest among young families with children living in large cities; achieved suburban living is most satisfactory to families in the age group between thirty and fifty years, and the suburban neighborhood, although still attractive, is least appealing to household members over fifty." 28/

Strong consumer preferences and strong voter preferences do, on the whole and in the long run, tend to coincide. If suburbs were popular with such a decided majority, politicians could assure themselves popularity by catering to pro-suburban feelings and use the power and resources of government to expedite the realization of the consumers' suburban dream. Insuring of mortgages by the Federal government, a device developed by the New Deal in an effort to halt foreclosures and stimulate employment for construction workers, became the magic wand that made suburban homeownership possible for millions of Americans. FHA and VA mortgages triggered an enormous home-building boom in the 1950s. The preponderance of these starts were in suburban locations.

> "Unquestionably the most significant factor in housing finance in the last twenty-five years has been the emergence of the Federal Government as a major force in the housing industry,"

reported the ACTION team headed by Martin Meyerson in 1960.

> "Federal aids to housing now affect 35 to 50 percent of all new residential building... In addition to these more directly measurable aids, a very large proportion of the remaining new residential construction is financed through savings institutions whose deposits are insured by the Federal Government. Thus, the direct and indirect impact of Federal aids on housing accounts for a majority of all new houses built and may affect three-quarters of the total in some years." 29/

The suburbs received additional federal assistance in the form of massive highway building programs that made suburban

housing accessible to a vastly increased job market as well as suburban shopping centers to an enlarged trade area and suburban industrial parks to an enlarged labor market. By the 1960s suburbs could no longer be referred to as the "boondocks." Many city dwellers found it less time-consuming to drive out to suburban centers to work or to shop than to use the city's archaic streets to get to its central business district.

Federal tax policy also favored the suburbs by giving an incentive to homeownership through deductions for payment on mortgage interest and property taxes, with no comparable benefits to tenants. Marion Clawson, in his monumental study of suburban land development, summed up this incentive:

> "A homeowner receives a substantial part of his income from his own home, in the form of housing, but this income does not have to be included in his income tax return. Slitor has calculated that these three aids (imputed rent, interest and taxes) to homeownership in 1958 amounted to $3.2 billion, or about $100 per owner-occupied dwelling. These financial advantages to homeownership tend to become more important, even on a relative basis, as personal incomes rise, in part because of the higher tax rates on larger incomes. On the basis of rather typical income and housing conditions, the federal income tax under current tax rates is reduced by from 14 to 31 percent of the interest and tax payments on the home. This is obviously a substantial incentive to home purchase." 30/

In summary, then, in answering the query as to why millions of Americans opted for the suburbs and continue to do so when within their means we can conclude that is explained by: (a) the high mobility of American households; (b) the subordination of residential continuity to increased earnings and career advance-

ment; (c) the anti-city bias in the American value system; (d) nostalgic identification of suburbs with our rural past; (e) the growing proportion of all metropolitan job opportunities, especially newly created ones, are in the suburbs; (f) suburbs are perceived as especially beneficient to child rearing; and (g) it has been Federal policy to favor suburban development by subsidizing homeownership and facilitating road access.

These then are the suburban "pulls." What are the city "pushes"? There are many factors affecting residence in cities that constitute a "push" influence: declining job opportunities, reduced city services, lowered quality of public schools, increased crime, rising local taxes, etc. These factors affect all city dwellers, without regard to race. However, many city dwellers of white race are affected by an additional factor that can act to "push" them to the suburbs: the presence in cities of increasing numbers of non-whites, especially under circumstances in which non-whites choose to live in housing outside of traditional racial concentrations and/or where school enrollments are racially balanced without regard to pupils' residence.

In the light of a suburbanization process that began before the turn of the century, how much weight are we to accord to the factor of race in assessing the outward migration of millions of Americans from city to suburb? It is certainly worth exploring.

IV. The Impact of Race Upon Suburbanization

In the wake of the prosperity of World War II and subsequent economic growth and rising incomes, not only were the affluent able to enter the suburbs, but skilled and semiskilled workers, clerks, small merchants, and young professionals could do so, too. Some came from the cities; others moved from rural America directly into suburbia. Their concept of what was typically American was seized upon by home builders, financial institutions -- and most assuredly by FHA -- all intent to develop and support homogeneous neighborhoods. Such a population, according to all the actors, was an absolute requirement for the protection of real estate investment. When most Americans were released from age-old constraints of poverty and space, the suburbs became the growth centers of the nation.

Because in recent decades the exodus from the central city to the suburbs peaked at the same time that a large number of the newcomers to the large metropolitan areas were readily identifiable minorities, there has been much distortion of what has been involved. Some have confused coincidence with causation. To them desertion of the central cities by middle- and upper-income whites is purely and simply a means of escape from blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos.[31/]

As noted above, suburbanization through migration has been almost a universal phenomenon in the United States. Today it is characteristic of Canada as well. In this country, many metropolitan areas with extremely small non-white populations are involved. Binghamton, New York; Brockton, Massachu-

setts; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Duluth, Minnesota; and Superior, Wisconsin are just a few examples. Thus color alone cannot account for the great migration to the nation's suburbs. As a matter of fact, race became an identified factor only after technology and rising incomes had made suburban living possible for the great mass of Americans. 32/

Had there been no migration of non-whites to urban communities, large-scale expansion of suburbia would have occurred. And, of course, non-whites participate in the process when they can do so. "Without the problem of race Canada's urban history has developed along lines much like the United States. The homogenization downward of the central cities with the departure of the affluent followed by the middle class and elements of the working class is similar." 33/

In this nation, obsession with race has not only distorted popular understanding of the process of suburbanization, but also obfuscated the true nature of the crisis of our cities. As Sternlieb recently observed:

> "This process of the 'defunctioning' of the central city would have occurred even if there had not been a problem of race. It would have been considerably slower in that case, and the capacity of society to adjust to it would have been greater, for the pace of change in our central cities has unquestionably been speeded up by racial tensions and fears. But serious though that cost has been, perhaps the greatest cost of the race factor is that it has obscured the real nature of what is going on in the central city. Even if there were no racial difference in our society, there would probably still be as many people on welfare and as many under- or unemployed, and they would still be unwelcome among their more affluent fellow citizens." 34/

The "affluent fellow citizens" referred to by Sternlieb, in the absence of race as an issue, would still have opted for suburban living and would have been busily engaged in erecting zoning barriers and opposing subsidized housing to keep out those of low income, as they do in the suburbs of cities with relatively few minority residents. Sternlieb is probably right to suggest that in the absence of race, the pace of change might have been slower in many cities and suburban exclusion on the basis of income might have been more moderate. We are dealing, after all, with a racist society where the public power is widely used to assure a racially discriminatory effect; where private actions in violation of minority rights are widespread; and where many whites are prepared to pay a premium to assure themselves separation from blacks.

Because we are a racist society, there is a tendency to attribute all or most of the problems of our cities to the presence of racial minorities. This leads to two equally misleading conclusions. The first, and most dangerous, is to assume that, were we racially homogeneous, the cities would have none of the crucial problems that they face. The second, in a large measure a reaction to the over-emphasis of the racial issue, is the assertion that race is not relevant to the city's problems.

Suburbia was not created in order to establish a haven for a racist middle class (although many of its developers appealed to class and color snobishness), but once suburbia was created to meet many needs and desires, our society easily found a way to convert it into such a haven. This outcome can, of course,

be explained with due regard to our federal system of government, of constitutional interpretations, of states rights, and of home rule. But it is necessary to conclude that it was no accident that in our society the institutional arrangements that emerged with suburbanization operated, even if blindly, to yield the decaying sections of old cities primarily to minorities and the attractions of suburbia primarily to whites.

At the same time, the myopia induced by accentuating race so that any and all phenomena in which it plays a role are seen exclusively as racial matters not only distorts reality but occassions acceptance of current racial residential distribution as inevitable and unchanging. It identifies any and all racial conflict in the urban complex as a major factor in accelerating the flight of whites from central cities. But such is not the case. For example, the recent opposition to, and violence in, school busing in Boston has not, to date, noticeably speeded up the movement out of the city. Preliminary census data show that Boston's population is holding steady. Massachusetts' Secretary of State, Paul H. Guzzi, no later than November 29th of this year said, "There is no evidence of an exodus of people from the city."[36/] Of course, as ACTION noted, this may also reflect the shortage of alternative shelter in today's housing market.

The suburbanization of America is a fact -- inevitably and irrevocably so. But it need not have been suburbanization in the form or with the content that emerged. In the long run, more likely by succeeding generations rather than ours, even

some of the wasteful and depressing physical form of suburbia can be remedied. The social pattern of suburbia, especially its racial exclusion, cannot and will not be altered unless and until we recognize the process and identify the many factors which make up the push and pull in migration.

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